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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Cal Poly to Honor Aerospace Legend Burt Rutan
with Medal of Excellence Sept. 16**

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly will honor legendary aircraft designer and aeronautical engineering alumnus Burt Rutan during Fall Convocation, Friday, Sept. 16.

Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker will present the President's Medal of Excellence to Rutan at a 9:30 a.m. ceremony in the Christopher Cohan Center, Harman Hall. The medal has been awarded on just three previous occasions.

Rutan, developer of SpaceShipOne, the world's first privately built aircraft to reach space and win the \$10-million Ansari X PRIZE, will deliver the keynote address, "Space, for the Rest of Us." Later that day, he will meet with Cal Poly aerospace engineering students for a question-and-answer session and take a tour of new aerospace facilities on campus.

Newsweek has described Rutan as "The man responsible for more innovations in modern aviation than any living engineer." Over the years, he has translated his revolutionary aviation ideas into practical, workable and affordable designs that include more than 30 groundbreaking aircraft.

Burt Rutan has earned numerous awards for his work, including the Presidential Citizen's Medal from Ronald Reagan for Voyager, the first aircraft to circle the globe non-stop without refueling. He earned Cal Poly's first-ever Honorary Doctor of Science degree in June 1987.

In his latest venture, Rutan has teamed up with Sir Richard Branson (founder of the Virgin Group of Companies) to form a new aerospace business, The Spaceship Company. The initial craft in the new company's fleet of commercial spaceships and aircraft to launch them, SpaceShipTwo and White Knight Two, are both now in development at Scaled Composites, the Mojave company Rutan founded in 1982 and where he is CEO.

"I would like to achieve a goal that NASA has neglected," Rutan said about his work. "I want to make flight outside the atmosphere accessible to the common man by making sub-orbital flights available to 'space tourists.'"

Born June 17, 1943, in Portland, Ore., and raised in Dinuba, Rutan built model aircraft as a child. "Throughout school, I spent long hours designing model airplanes to win local contests and set records," he said. "Even then, I was interested only in constructing my own designs from raw materials such as balsa wood, paper and bits of wreckage from models my older brother had flown and crashed."

Rutan began flying airplanes for real in 1959 at the age of 16. After graduating from Cal Poly in 1965, he worked as a flight test engineer at Edwards Air Force Base. In 1974, he founded the Rutan Aircraft Factory, a small business in Mojave that developed light aircraft and sold educational materials for 3,000 homebuilt aircraft customers.

"As a pioneer in aviation and an entrepreneur who exemplifies the Cal Poly learn-by-doing educational philosophy, Burt Rutan has set an important example for scientists, engineers and inventors in all disciplines to be bold in their scientific and technological innovation efforts," said President Baker. "Throughout his distinguished career, he has demonstrated the extraordinary difference that a creative spirit, driven by curiosity, can make to the advancement of humankind."

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Note to editors: Burt Rutan will be available for interviews immediately following the convocation, approximately 11 a.m., in the Founder's Room at the Performing Arts Center. Reporters and photographers are also welcome to attend the student

question-and-answer session with Burt Rutan at 2 p.m. in the Keck Lab at the Advanced Technology Laboratory building.

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